

The mediatization, the bicycle narratives and the media phenomena

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Abstract

It analyzes narratives published in printed books whose reports refer, completely or partially, to the personal transformations occurred as a result of the use of the bicycle as a form of tourism or leisure. In particular “bicycle narratives”, or “cyclotouristic”, understood as “(...) reports, textual, imagery or sound, structured from bicycle trips, therefore phatic, for tourist or entertainment purposes” (SOSTER, 2017, 2018). We are disturbed by the axiom according to which a) bicycles transform, generally for the better, people. But, also, the assumption that the b) materiality of the senses resulting from this phenomenon is due to the complexities provoked by the process of mediatization in the circumscribed grammars. This is an analysis of a qualitative nature (DEMO, 2000), with a discursive approach, following the model of Veron (2004).

Keywords: Bicycle narratives. Cyclotouristic narratives. Cycling. Mediatization. Sense.

Narratives that transform

If, at other times, we sought to understand, through the bias of mediatization, the emergence of bicycle narratives to the narrative-discursive category, and, later, their insertion in media discourse (SOSTER, 2017, 2018), the objective here is to analyze reports of this nature that refer, completely or partially, to personal, individual or collective, changes that have occurred as a result of using the bicycle as a form of tourism or leisure. Bicycle narratives, or tourist cycle narratives, are “(...) textual, imagery or sound reports structured from bicycle trips, therefore factual, for tourism or entertainment purposes” (SOSTER, 2017, 2018). Veron (2013) and Braga (2012) understand mediatization as: a) interposition of a technology between man and his actions; as: b) interactional reference process. On the one hand, the axiom, usual in narratives of this nature, worries us that a) bicycles usually transform people for the better. But also, the assumption that b) the materiality of the senses resulting from this phenomenon is due to the complexifications caused by the process of mediatization in circumscribed grammars.

In the first case, in the seminal dialogue with Bergson (2005), we attribute this perception - personal transformations resulting from the use of the bicycle as a means of

transport in leisure situations – to the fact that cyclists, when traveling, are on the move using technology with low environmental impact, allowing them to interact more with their surroundings. In doing so, in contact with other people and places, and judging by the discursive marks left in the reports of cyclists, they change (people) and they change themselves. Augé (2009, p. 39): “(...) *montar em bicicleta es aprender a administrar el tempo, tanto el tempo corto del día o de la etapa, como el tempo largo de los años que se acumulan. Y sin embargo (y aquí está la paradoja) la bicicleta también es una experiencia de eternidad*”¹. In this way, the flow of life is recreated, essentially materializing Heráclito’s seminal thought: “You can’t step into the same river twice” (LEÃO, 1980, p. 113).

This happens because, when traveling by bicycle, regardless of the way they do it, the equipment they use or the distance they travel, cyclists end up living new and successive experiences, thus updating the contact with the world, through soft technology², the flow of existence. It is true that the transformation occurs in any situation of life – “If everything is in time, everything changes internally and the same concrete reality is never repeated” (BERGSON, 2005, p. 50), but it also seems correct to say that, on a bicycle, it seems to be more organic³. “*La naturaliza no es lineal, nada es simple, el orden se oculta tras el desorden, lo aleatório está siempre em acción, lo imprevisible deve ser comprendido*” (BALANDIER, 1993, p. 9).

From another angle, in the perspective of mediatization, the hypothesis that moves us is that the emergence and enhancement of narratives of this nature are due to the transformation of reports on bicycle trips into media phenomena. That is, narratives that become, at the same time, autonomous and persistent from the discursive point of view and that generate, from this condition (autonomy and persistence), different meanings. “(...) *tenemos um fenómeno mediático solo a partir del momento em que los signos poseen, em a algún grado, las propiedades de autonomia tanto a respecto de la fuente como del destino, y de persistencia em el tempo*”⁵ (VERON, 2013, p. 145-146).

We are therefore moving, in the dialogue with Proulx (2016), between two epistemological perspectives: studies of reception and of uses. In the first case, because we seek to understand the phenomenon under analysis by means of discursive clues dispersed throughout the reports; in the second, because we do it considering the technical object (the bicycle) and the relationship established with it. In this sense, and following Proulx’s (2016) reflection, we expand the sense of use and consider, from it, both the use and the appropriation of the technical object for what it is worth (cyclists). In clearer words, not only

1 In a free translation, “(...) to ride a bicycle is to learn to manage time, both the short time of the day, or the stage, and the time of the years that accumulate. And without a doubt (and here is the paradox), the bicycle is also an experience of eternity”.

2 We consider the bicycle a soft technology as, despite the technological advances it has been suffering since its invention, and its popularization, it is not polluting and its use causes little environmental impact, when compared to motor vehicles, for example.

3 Organic here understood with what refers to the natural development of something.

4 In a free translation: “Nature is not linear, nothing is simple, order is hidden behind disorder, the random is always in action, the unpredictable must be understood”.

5 In a free translation by the author: “(...) we have a media phenomenon only from the moment that signs have, to some degree, the properties of autonomy, both with regard to origin and destination, as well as persistence in the rhythm”.

the technical use of a technology with low environmental impact (because it does not use fuels, but human traction) for a certain purpose (the cycle paths), but what happens when it is appropriated for this purpose:

When we speak of appropriation, there is not simply the technical domain of the object; there is also a gesture of integration with everyday life. In other words, if you only master the technical object without integrating it into your professional, personal, domestic life, there is, in our opinion, no real appropriation. Ultimately, this creative gesture of use possibly leads to a reinvention of practice (PROULX, 2016, p. 45 – Our translation).

Thus, it articulates here, doubly, what is of the order of the symbolic and of the material (PROULX, 2016).

From a methodological point of view, considering that we analyze, in summary, the materiality of meanings in statements arranged on the pages of printed books, whose contents are reports of transformations that occurred during bicycle trips, the methodology we adopt will be of qualitative nature. The approach will allow us to observe, on the analyzed surfaces, what Demo (2000) calls “the subjective side of the phenomena”. That is, more than records of experiences, the essence of the lived; which, once considered discursively, transform testimonials into data that can be interpreted. We will use discourse in the perspective attributed by Verón (2004, p. 61), for whom the notion “(...) designates not only linguistic matter, but any significant set considered as such (...)”.

If we admit, on the other hand, that bicycle narratives, due to their factual-descriptive⁶ textual nature, represent the point of view, or the speech, of narrators in order to narrate a lived experience, we can state, with some precision, that they are structured based on testimonials. In other words, they are testimonial narratives about something that cyclists experienced, whether as a protagonist of the experience, or not, and that transformed them in some way.

What differs, compared to testimonial statements, for example, is that, in the case of bicycle narratives, they are mediatized. “People’s life experiences are increasingly *mediated*, they take on more and more contact with the outside world through virtual and discursive representations of reality” (MOTTA, 2012, p. 28 – Emphasis added) It is to say, in other words, that they are established from records (texts, images, etc.) in devices (as in the case of books), which allow them to acquire, in this relationship, as said, a) autonomy and b) persistence and establish new and successive symbiosis based on this condition.

We are talking about narrative structures that add value, in the dialogue with Sodré (2009, p. 187), to “(...) the ‘trips’ (both in the strict sense of the word and metaphorically, as an action that potentiates individual wisdom) characterized as ‘experience’ for the

⁶ The narratives are factual-descriptive basically because they propose to describe the experience lived by cyclists, which helps to understand why, as a rule, they are written in the first person.

writer”, they are, therefore, despite their “mediatized” condition, of narrators before the molds of Benjamin (2012), modern, than of Santiago (2002), postmodern. That is, they bring with the narrated, as an effect of the process of mediatization, the perspective of personal transformation through the account of the lived experience:

Benjamin’s narrator is part of the transmission belt of this concrete knowledge, in which advice, ethical and practical teachings are obtained. This type of narrative constitutes the communicative basis of the social group, therefore, the primary forms of transmission of the community ethos, that is, of traditions and ways of being. Its temporality is necessarily slow, since the harmonic interiorization of the experiences demands, for the listener, the prudent interval between the reports; for the narrator, the temporal accumulation itself as a criterion of wisdom (SODRÉ, 2000, p. 180 – Our translation).

The post-modern narrator, explains Santiago (2002, p. 45), is:

(...) the one who wants to extract the narrated action from him, in an attitude similar to that of a reporter or spectator. He narrates the action as a spectacle he watches (literally or not) from the audience, from the grandstand or from an armchair in the living room or in the library; he doesn’t narrate while acting.

Therefore, different from the narrator who, in our case, not only writes in the first person - a mark of this model of narratives - about a trip he took on a bicycle, as he points out, in the report/testimony, how important this was to transform his life. More than a paradox, the referred emergency suggests that mediatization, in its procedurally, complexifies, in the reconfigurations that it provokes, axiomatically established places and temporalities.

We will not persist on this discussion, despite the relevance of the topic in the analyzed scenario, at the risk of deviating the focus of attention. Let me explain how we will view our object from a methodological point of view, so that we can then reflect on it. As a methodological explanation, therefore, and based on the premises suggested by Demo (2000) so that I can consider testimonies as objects endowed with scientific, six basic conditions will be observed in the choices made here, namely: 1) The records cannot be fortuitous, at the risk of adding nothing to the analysis or being easily dismissed; 2) its relevance to the target context must be evident; 3) they must be well formulated, that is, endowed with logical consistency; 4) the testimonies that are related to large experiences are denser; 5) its amplitude must be directly related to its consistency; and, finally, 6) usually, due to their importance, these records are exemplary, in the sense of effectively indicating a transformation in process.

We will observe the conditions listed above in six reference works on the subject, without totalizing claims. We consider a book as reference when its content serves directly

or indirectly as a reference for other works of a similar thematic nature or which cover reflexively, or normatively, the target subject. In this sense, and in the case of bicycle narratives, a book will be a reference⁷, for example, when reading it is considered important for the experience of other cyclists precisely because it brings with it values common to all.

The place where we are

Before we proceed and in order to better understand the mediatization of bicycle narratives as media phenomena, it is necessary to define, although briefly, a) the place where we are located when the subject is mediatization, b) what we understand by narrative, and finally, c) what it means to think of bicycle narratives as media phenomena. Movements a) and b) will have the feature of a bibliographic review. Therefore, they will be brief, given that they have already been discussed in other moments of our research path.

The mediatization of narratives

Mediatization is understood here as a key-hermeneutics to reflect on the complexifications that are established in the narratives when they are observed as media phenomena. We will delimit it, in the dialogue with Veron (2013, 2004, 1980), Fausto Neto (2010), Braga (2012), Gomes (2017), Ferreira (2013) and Sodré (2009), and hold the perspectives, as said, as well as a) interposition of a technology between man and his actions and b) interactional reference process.

It is to say, in the first case, that we are referring to the observance of something that begins at the dawn of humanity, as Veron points out (1980, 2004), that is, the use of technology by man (voice, fire, etc.), and which is enhanced as society develops and becomes more complex (machines, computers, etc.). For this reason, technology is thought of as a means, but also, particularly in the days that follow, and in the nomenclature of Gomes (2017) and Sodré (2009), as an instigator of new environments. The point of view is related, in our case, on the one hand, to the use of technologies to register bicycle narratives (registration and storage, mainly), but also as a way of inserting it into media discourse, through social networking sites, for example (SOSTER, 2017).

But, also, and with Braga (2012), as a kind of paradigm shift in the way we relate to the world. For this reason, we stop thinking about technology only as a means, form of access or ambience and put it as an interactive reference process. That is, as something that is part of our way of being in the world, naturally. It is what we try to observe when we point out (SOSTER, 2017) that this condition makes recording and publicizing their journeys as

⁷ The book will be a reference, for example, when reading it is important for the experience of other cyclists precisely because it brings, with it, values common to all. From another angle, and considering that there are no studies, in the specialized literature or not, that measure the impact of this narrative model on its readers, we will be guided, for example, by the titles that are known by cyclists who dialogue through comments posted on specialized social networking sites such as Cicloturismo Brasil (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/cicloturismobrasil/>) and others. Here again, we have indicative perspectives rather than totalizing ones.

important as traveling, as if the two situations could not be thought of separately and were, in the end, the same.

Narrative that touches us

With Piccinin (2012, p. 68), we will assume that the studies of the narrative, in addition to its first condition of “(...) succession of events and state of affairs mediated by characters in a chronical (logical) perspective”, bring at its core, with Ricouer (2010), the ability to lend a human dimension to temporal experience.

For this reason, it is observed that the narrative can never be “just” narrative, since it reaches states of proposition beyond the original ones. First, because it is capable of measuring or being a measure of time itself - establishing links between the past and the present - the narrative produces an inexorable link between the experience of being organized between before and after in the course of the stories it narrates (PICCININ, 2012, p. 68-60 – Our translation).

In other words, it humanizes us. This is done, on the one hand, by giving life to what is narrated (RESENDE, 2011), helping us to understand ourselves better and how we build our self-narratives (MOTTA, 2013); therefore, our self-knowledge (GAI, 2009), but also the uniqueness of our actions in the world:

Our individual life, our identity, is a personal narrative. We are always telling stories about ourselves, making short reports of our experiences and testimonies of our dreams. (...) We built a singular self-meaning: our self is transformed into a short story, into an appraising account (MOTTA, 2012, p. 24 – Our translation).

What changes, in the case of bicycle narratives, is that they leave the sphere of orality and they mediate themselves; that is, they are affected by the mediatization process. If this happens in this way, it is because it transforms, as we are arguing, into a media phenomenon, therefore into a vector of mediatization, and thus starts to be affected by its process, mediatizing⁸, reconfiguring itself.

Narratives as media phenomena

With Verón (2013), we will think of media phenomena as transformations that are established from the moment the senses are materialized in devices such as books,

⁸ We have been pursuing this hypothesis since 2008, at least: the key idea is that devices, when positioned as mediatization vectors, are affected by its process, becoming mediatized. In doing so, they are reconfigured, complexified: they are transformed.

as this lends autonomy to the narratives. The concept of autonomy adopted here refers to the possibility of the existence of a certain semantic uniformity in certain records under specific conditions, in spite of the bonds that may come to be established later, considering their materiality. The noun “bicycle”, for example, found in all cycle tourism narratives, represents, roughly and with small variations, in all of them, a vehicle that has two wheels, saddle, handlebars, among other components and that, generally, is powered by human traction using pedals and chains. This semantic linearity allows, for example, that we all know, through the complex cultural ties that we have in common, that the nine-letter noun describes, at least for Portuguese-speaking readers, a vehicle like the one mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph. That is, a bicycle.

Its meaning begins to change, however, from the moment the word “bicycle”, more than a cultural reference, establishes nexuses in a certain discursive textual structure (phrase, paragraph, etc.). It is from this moment that what Verón (2013) calls the creation of “stories”, or events, led by people who travel by bicycle begins. Because of this bias, bicycle narratives begin to generate stories as books come into existence. In other words, when their narratives, autonomous, encounter conditions of persistence⁹, which in turn will pave the way for the generation of historicity, as we will see below.

From another angle, if autonomy, in the perspective we are analyzing, seems to imply, in some way, a certain uniformity, or linearity, semantics, it also seems true to say that the narratives will always be distinct from each other, even though they are thematically linked (they are cycling) and the premise, common to all, that “the bicycle transforms”. In simple words, they are all narratives about transformational bicycle trips; what changes are the stories generated from them.

It is at this point that we will encounter, in our reflection, what Verón (2013), concerned with the conditions of circulation of the sense, delimited with the moment when the conditions of access to the senses are established: “*Cuando el sense cobra cuerpo and he enters into historical relationships, if he plans immediately, the third of the rules that define the conditions of access to meaning, es decir, the conditions of his circulation*”¹⁰ (VERON, 2013 p. 148-149). That is, the moment when the bicycle narratives explain their form of transformation, which projects our view both 1) in relation to the grammars of recognition, which constitute the semiosis that make our objects media phenomena, as 2) the role of language in this context, as it allows “(...) the externalization of the saying in form” (FAUSTO NETO, 2013, p. 50).

In a seminal article, Fausto Neto (2010) delimited and synthesized the evolution of the concept of circulation in five distinct phases, which we will briefly describe below:

9 Persistence should not be confused with existence. The difference between the first and the second is directly related to the insertion of the narrative in media discourse, that is, in the way it “relates to the world”. It is to say, in other words, that existing is not enough for historicity; dialogue, contact, grammars are also necessary, otherwise we will have only autonomy.

10 In a free translation: “When the meaning acquires a body and enters into historical relations, the *thirdness* of the rules that define the conditions of access to meaning, that is, the conditions of its circulation, immediately begins”.

PHASE 1

Circulation as techno-discursive action

In this perspective, studies on circulation understand the phenomenon as a kind of ‘automatic zone’ for passing speeches.

PHASE 2

Circulation as third party

Circulation is seen here as a discursive production, therefore, relational and not just of a transmitting character.

PHASE 3

As a zone of indeterminacy

Circulation is understood as a device, that is, as a space that generates potentialities.

PHASE 4

Circulation as difference

Circulation as a result of differences between grammars of production and recognition.

PHASE 5

As a point of articulation

Circulation gains the status of a device, that is, as a point of articulation between grammars of production and recognition.

Let us choose option 5 - circulation understood as a point of articulation between grammars of production and recognition, without, however, neglecting, in essence, items 3 and 4, which will think of it as a difference between those grammars. Thus, we have, who knows, the emergence of bicycle narratives to the condition of a device, “(..) which is taken into account for carrying out the work of negotiation and appropriation of meanings (..)” (FAUSTO NETO, 2010, p. 11), capable of articulating different instances and visible through the bias of marks on the surface of the analyzed objects. These marks, according to Verón (2004, p. 53), “(..) can be interpreted as features of production operations and as features that define the system of references of possible discourse readings in recognition” (VERÓN, 2004, p. 53).

It is to say, in simpler words, that, if we assume the existence of a speech, in bicycle narratives, realizing that there is a potential for transforming them, a) we learn about them through textual marks that operate, in the end, as b) devices that are established from the confluence between grammars of production and recognition. In doing so, not only do they begin to establish historical relationships, but they define, in this movement, the conditions of access to meaning. That is, they allow transformations in this movement.

That being said, let us now let the object speak.

Analytical selection

It can be said, with some quality of precision, that reports about personal transformation, individual or not, which occurred as a result of the use of the bicycle as a form of tourism or leisure, are found in a good part of the books of the category “bicycle narratives”, or “bicycle touring”. Based on this assumption and to avoid the risk of dispersion, considering the volume of production in this regard, we will delimit our selection on books that have as characteristics: 1) reports of long distance travel (over a thousand kilometers); 2) duration of at least 30 days; 3) without geographical delimitation (any country, or more than one); 4) that are, in some way, a reference for other cyclists and that bring, in some way; 5) testimonies about changes that have occurred as a result of the cycle travel they are undertaking.

The excerpts will be isolated using the table below. More than decontextualizing, or stratifying, knowledge that finds discursive meaning in the close relationship with the context in which it is inserted, the objective is, with the tool, to locate the textual marks that operate, in the narratives, as indexers of deeper layers of meaning then, to better analyze them. The option therefore disregards, therefore, issues related to the amount of incidence and values, on the other hand, interpretive biases.

Table 1 – Analysis scheme

BOOK/AUTHOR	LOCATION	EXCERPT

Source: Author’s elaboration.

Briefly, the first column (Book/author) refers to the name of the work and who wrote it; followed by the indication of the chapter/page (Location) where the text is located and, finally, the transcription thereof (Excerpt).

We will analyze, based on the criteria explained above, the following books on bicycle narratives: 1) “*No guidão da liberdade: a incrível história do brasileiro que fez a volta ao mundo em uma bicicleta*” (Editores Gráficas Unidos, 2012); 2) “*O mundo sem anéis: 100 dias em bicicleta*”, by Mariana Bertol Carpanezzi (Longe, 2015); 3) “*Fé latina: uma volta de bicicleta pela América do Sul*” (Editora do Autor, 2014); 4) “*Homem livre ao redor do mundo sobre uma bicicleta*”, by Danilo Perrotti Machado (Giro Giro, 2015); 5) “*O mundo ao lado: uma volta ao mundo de bicicleta*” (Phorte Editora, 2014); and 6) “*300 dias de bicicleta: 22 mil km de emoções pelas américas*” (Edições de Janeiro, 2016).

Figure 1 – Research selection

Source: Publicizing sites.

The bicycle transforms

The first one (1) relates the trip that lawyer Antonio Olinto Ferreira took around the world starting on May 22, 1993, what makes him a pioneer in Brazil, both in adventures of this nature and in how to publish them in book form. Right on the initial pages, Ferreira (2012) explained, throughout the introduction, what made him abandon a promising and profitable career as a lawyer to become a cyclist. It all started in 1991, when he was traveling on a motorcycle with his girlfriend in the South of the country and found a bicycle traveler at a gas station.

He asked us if there was any place where he could eat there, since he intended to stay overnight. Immediately we all turned our attention to him and started listening to his stories and adventures. He came from Curitiba (PR), following the same route as ours, and intended to reach the city of Rio Grande (RS). He was a man of a certain age, (...) he was going to find his son who was going to college in Rio Grande.

I thought: - That's – That's so cool! The man traveled by bicycle ... Isn't he crazy!? He didn't do much mileage a day, he didn't carry a lot of equipment, but he seemed quite satisfied, even on that rainy day and despite the cold wind that blew from the supposed summer of the Santa Catarina mountains (FERREIRA, 2012, p. 17 – Our translation).

The perception that the path and, in it, his life, could change substantially if he changed the two wheels of his motorcycle for that of a bicycle started to share space with the professional concerns of the newly graduated lawyer. That was until the following year, when he bought his first bicycle to go to work and take care of his health with her: “In addition to improving my physical fitness, I wanted to lose my belly a little” (FERREIRA,

2012, p. 17). From this moment on and until the end of the work, the bicycle pathway not only describes the places where he passed and the people he met along the way, but also highlights his transformation experiences in the narrative. This is the case, for example, of what happened on June 18, 1995, when he had covered 27,785 kilometers since I left home.

My first experiences in the United States showed how my concerns are innocuous and pointless, since they start from my limited observations of being human. I saw that in each difficult situation, or in the imminence of this, I will never be able to know exactly what its outcome will be, nor its reason for being. I believe that all actions and reactions in our life are intertwined, and the situations that fate presents us serve to show our path and our mission on earth (FERREIRA, 2012, p. 173 – Our translation).

Something similar is registered on the pages of book 2, by Mariana Bertol Carpanezi. The book tells the cycle journey that its author took between June and September 2013, for one hundred days, or 5,000 kilometers, between France and Spain. The reason that took Carpanezi (2015), back then a PhD student at a university in Geneva, to the road was the depression that she suffered after two years of course. “My body became ill until I lost myself in a kind of exile between two lives that could no longer mean me - not even the one I had left in Brazil, with the rigidity and the daily routine of the public office, nor the one that happened before me in my new continent” (CARPANEZZI, 2015, 1.3%).

Carpanezi (2015), after a friend invitation, decided to go on a bicycle trip lasting approximately 15 days and an estimated distance of 1,200 km for “(...) well-organized bike lanes on the Atlantic coast of France, between the Britain and the Spanish border” (CARPANEZZI, 2015, 1. 3%). In doing so, however, and near the end of the initially planned journey, the cyclist discover that she was taken by what she calls “a childlike love for traveling” and “resistance to end of the trip”. It is when she launches herself into what would be, among the trips she had made by bicycle until then, the most transformative:

So tender in its simplicity, the trip taught me to admire it both as another and as a part of me, exactly in that place where God meets the human. That is why, perhaps, she was so beautiful: rising above this addiction to want to control, she falls under the order of the sacred. And yet, sewed at the intersections of attempts with mismatches, it is still fragile and simply human (CARPANEZZI, 2015, 1.5%).

Unlike what happens with most of the books on bicycle narratives, whose texts are hegemonically descriptive, although you may find reflections resulting from the experience gained from what they lived, in Carpanezi (2015) the tone is fundamentally impressionist. The narrator naturally describes the cyclist’s day-to-day life; the places you pass and the

people you meet, but without taking these aspects too long. The emphasis is on what you are feeling, on the transformations that are taking place.

Once in a while, they ask me what I think when I ride, and I reply that my bicycle is not for reflection, but for emptying. First the not-born-for-mornings. Then, the traumas of the past. The anger of Geneva and the PhD, the ingratitude of ex-boyfriends and friends, daily, one by one, every detail, the unforgivable world. Suddenly, a spin. Time and tiredness dissolve the mental. I can't explain it any other way: after about three hours the wind from the road enters the brain, refreshes ideas and creates a vacuum. The black hole absorbs everything around it. The memories disappear. And also, the future (CARPANEZZI, 2015, l. 18% - Our translation).

In the book by Ambrósio (2014), we will find something similar, in terms of angle. In it, the cyclist tells the journey around the world that he made in 2012, in a total of 983 cycling days, or 25,160 km, and after having visited 17 countries. More than reporting the experiences he had, or places he passed by, even if he does, the focus of his attention falls, page after page, on his contact with the people he encounters along the way and the difference that the fact that he is cycling represents in that sense. The tone is transcendental from the beginning, almost religious, something equally not very common in this model of narratives:

A sincere thanks to the great creator of life, of this majestic planet, inhabited by hearts so beautiful, that pulsate unconditional love, even in the midst of so much pain. I seek humility to thank you more sincerely, for having drawn all the facts that led me to the realization of this dream (AMBRÓSIO, 2014, p. 11 – Our translation).

It is relevant to note that the bicycle is transformed, in this context, into a character. As the story goes, it is no longer seen as a mere record and starts to generate historicity. In doing so, the bicycle becomes a character in the narrative. Starting with the way the narrator refers to it: from a simple bicycle, she becomes the “Princess”:

I was on the road crushed by two things that I love: beneath me, the Princess, who was still floating; above, a force, a force of a very large Being, putting pressure on my head, a pressure that is both strong and light, of something perfectly intelligent, that lives in the universe and takes care of us full time (AMBRÓSIO, 2014, p. 66 – Our translation).

The experiences succeed, and here, again, in a different way from what is usually found in this model of narratives, issues such as landscapes, customs and foreign habits are used as a background to value, discursively, what emerges from the contact between people.

At night, we were able to cook in the very simple little house of Senhora Modesta, a super cute and friendly little chick, who is worthy of the name. We shared laughs and stories with the residents of the village, who were constantly coming in and out of the kitchen in order to meet the tourists who were there. (...) At bedtime, the residents worked together to get somewhere to place the mattresses. The doors of the meeting hall opened, and we spent the night there. A very cold night and still well slept (AMBRÓSIO, 2014, p. 131 – Our translation).

We categorize, in terms of gender, the style of the bicycle narratives by Carpenezzi (2015) and Ambrósio (2014) as transcendental, that is, as something that refers to a reality that is more important, in terms of value, than the factual reality. Or, in a Kantian sense, that: “Designates the property of the a priori forms by which our faculties of perceiving (sensitivity) and knowing (understanding) constitute perceptual and intellectual knowledge” (WARIN, 2002).

Thus, the bicycle narrative will have a transcendental nature when it values, in whole or in part, transformation experiences that have been achieved through bicycle trips, regardless of routes, periods and distances covered. It is equivalent to say, considering the axiom that we have defended in this article, that all bicycle narrative will be, in some way, transcendental, but some will be more accentuated than others, as in the works we analyzed above.

This is the case, for example, of the book by Perrotti (2015), one of the Brazilians pioneers on bicycle trips around the earth. In this case, the tone is not mostly transcendental. Throughout the narrative, the emphasis is on the description of his own trip through the 59 countries he visited. But, even so, Perrotti (2015) does not shy away from recording, since the beginning, the transformations he experienced during the three years, three months and three days of travel and 50 thousand kilometers cycled.

What scared me, in fact, was leading a life that was not worth living. At the time, I had graduated in business from a good college in Brazil and went to London for a season, taking advantage of my European citizenship to learn the English language. I paid for the course and day-to-day expenses as a waiter’s assistant at Pizza Hut, clearing customers’ tables with immigrants from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and Turkey. While working, I saw the sad eyes of my colleagues taking the dishes to the kitchen and, when I realized, I had the same eyes as them (PERROTTI, 2015, p. 13).

Something similar occurs with Simões (2014). In 2006, at the age of 24, shortly after completing the law undergraduate in São Paulo, he decided that the time had come “(...) to dive into the world and myself” (SIMÕES, 2014, p. 19 – Our translation) and he left for a bicycle trip around the world that would last three years and two months and that would cover 46 countries and five continents. Over 328 pages, he reports the journey he traveled and the places he went, but his attention seems to be focused on the transformations his life undergoes as the journey progresses. In chapter 10 - “At home, away from home” - we find an example of what we are saying:

Until that moment, I had seen only a small part of the world and it was already much bigger than I imagined. I realized that it was not possible to translate it into numbers or words and that this observation made me rethink it and rethink of me in it as well. I felt that, inside me, many things were changing places. I was no longer sure of anything. He remembered everything he had seen, but he didn't have time to digest so much information. All days were full of new experiences and I was almost never able to reflect on what I had lived. I lived as intensely as possible and did not know when I would stop to reflect on all that (SIMÕES, 2014, p. 109 – Our translation).

It is something similar to what it meant for Sven Schmid, a German engineer, to take a long bike ride and then tell how it all happened in a book (SCHMID, 2016). The reason for cycling is similar to the others analyzed in this article: anguish, but, in this case, with the life he had as an engineer in a Brazilian company; difficulties involving the renewal of your visa and memories of short bicycle trips they made as a teenager in their homeland. Schmid (2016) traveled alone for ten months from Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Montana, in the United States, crossing countries like Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Colombia along the way.

Once again, we are faced with a book in which roads, cities and landscapes seem to serve as a backdrop for what the narrator seems to be looking for in his journey. It is what denotes the highlighted section, recorded when Schmid passed through Colombia:

The landscape is amazing, but at this moment the silence overwhelms me. As relaxing and healing as solitude can be in the right situations, at this moment it weighs on me. I want to return quickly to meet people, to be in the middle of the city, of the movement (SCHMID, 2016, p. 125 – Our translation).

But the excerpt below, from the chapter “For the rear-view mirror” (SCHMID, 2016, p. 210 – Our translation), perhaps summarizes with greater precision what this trip meant for the German engineer who, at the time, decided to travel through America because he was bored:

After arriving home in Germany, everything continued exactly as before. But inside me things have changed. As an inhabitant of a western European country with almost limitless chances and possibilities, we tend to consider things like well-being, education, peace, security and justice almost natural. We forget how valuable these achievements are and what they mean for the quality of life - until the moment when we confront people who live in a society without any of this. (...) They show us that it is possible to deal with situations in various ways and that there are several paths that lead to the same end (SCHMID, 2016, p. 125 – Our translation).

The cyclist ends his narrative by stating that, in the end, what is enhanced, for those who are traveling by bicycle, is the perspective from which they begin to see the world. Or, in other words: “Even when we are unable to change a certain situation, we at least have the option of deciding from a certain angle to see it” (SCHMID, 2016, p. 125 – Our translation). And the bicycle, we would add, seems to be a founding part of this aim.

That being said, let us pass on the necessary interpretative considerations.

Interpretative considerations

In order to think about the bicycle narratives in the perspective that we propose in this article, that is, as media phenomena, it is necessary, as noted, in the dialogue with Verón (2013), to consider that his discursive production process starts to take place from new conceptual bases: autonomy and persistence. In other words, once registered on a device, whatever it may be, it allows the generation of stories.

A story, from another angle, can mean something of the order of the factual; rather than what actually happened in terms of the lived world, as a phenomenon of the semi-narrative plan, referring, here, to the elements that discursively structure the text (REIS; LOPES, 1988). In the first case, we are thinking about what the narratives tell us, referentially: the journeys made, the paths they took, the people they met on the route, etc. The semi-narrative plane, on the other hand, occurs, for example, when a bicycle, more than a reference, becomes, verbatim, a character in the narrative.

Following our reasoning, and considering, in a complementary perspective, both cases - factual reference or semi-narrative plan, it is in the condition that the bicycle narratives, elevated to the category of media phenomena, are accessed and generate historicity that are potentially established, the necessary conditions for the axiom we have worked on so far to take place - the bicycle transforms people, generally for the better. In other words, it is when they acquire transformative power and start to transform other realities.

It has to be considered, from another angle - and we will not face this issue here; the role that the device (in our case, printed books) occupies in this discussion. Restlessness is

justified, in the first place, because we are talking about media phenomena. But, also, because we observed, in another moment, in the dialogue with Motta (2012), that the process of mediatization interferes in the internal dispute of the narrative voices of the reporting books and biographies of a journalistic nature; and that, in terms of gender (SOSTER, 2018), they are, in some way, journalistic. There is, therefore, something to be noted at this intersection. Sufficient reasons, it seems to us, to continue with our concerns in this regard.

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